

**EAGLECREST BOARD OF DIRECTORS
REPORT OF RETREAT – SEPTEMBER 29, 2012**

The Eaglecrest Board of Directors met in retreat on Saturday, September 29, 2012. Area manager Matt Lillard participated, along with senior staff Jeffra Clough and Brian Davies. Assembly liaison Karen Crane also participated. The purpose of the retreat was to review the Eaglecrest Ski Area Master Plan that the board adopted in April 2012, and the list of potential activities and facilities discussed in the plan, and to formulate an action plan for those items that the board intends to move forward with in the near and intermediate term.

The board reviewed the findings of the plan and the process by which the plan was developed, but focused most of its attention on the facilities and activities discussed in Section IV for improving both winter and summer operations at Eaglecrest. Consensus was achieved on many points, as follows (tracking the sections as they appear in the plan):

1. Winter Operations.

a. – c. Buildings. The board discussed the plan's recommendations for main lodge improvements, a learning center, and an additional operations building, but agreed that the bond proposition on the ballot on Tuesday, October 2, will shape the board's approach to these items. Further discussion of plans for these facilities will be deferred until the results of the proposition are known.

[Note: With passage of the bond proposition, design and construction of the learning center will be the priority project for Eaglecrest in the near term. A timeline prepared by CBJ Engineering proposes that planning and design commence early in 2013. This phase is expected to be completed by early 2014 and the project would go out to bid. Construction would begin in April 2014 and be completed no later than early 2015, though staff will work to accelerate this schedule so that construction can be completed prior to the beginning of the 2014-15 season, in December 2014.]

d. Snowmaking. The board agreed with staff's recommendation and plans to restore the existing snowmaking system to its current capacity but not to make any significant upgrades to the area's snowmaking capability.

e. Night Lighting. Staff expressed interest in expanding night lighting on the Hooter face, but not to consider lighting Black Bear. The board concurred, and requested staff to prepare an assessment of the cost for expanding the lighting infrastructure in the area served by Hooter, including bringing electrical power to the top of the lift. In the meantime, staff intends this season to experiment with using the current lighting system for occasional events involving rental of the area and a series of training nights that would be organized and paid for by the Juneau Ski Club.

f. Lifts. Board and staff agreed that the platter lift will not be re-installed at the area. The board expressed interest in moving forward with a “magic carpet” conveyor for beginners, with installation targeted for the 2014-15 season. Staff will investigate options for purchasing a conveyor, including used lifts. Board and staff also discussed the eventual need for replacing the Ptarmigan lift. Although the lift is currently in good operational shape, and the area has a good supply of spare parts for the lift (some just recently purchased), in time the lift will outlive its useful life. The board requested staff to prepare a life cycle assessment of all area lifts, for long term planning purposes.

g. Terrain Within the Area Boundary. Board and staff agreed that regular maintenance, clearing, and tree thinning of existing runs is important. The board requested staff to prepare a general schedule for this work, for reference. The master plan raises the possibility of tree thinning in the area below Willawaw. Staff indicated that this is already happening to some extent through efforts of private parties, and agreed to monitor what is happening in this area and to consider augmenting it with gradual clearing from Grubstake moving south. In time, this may warrant an adjustment of the ski area boundary in this area, with new signage.

h. Terrain Outside the Area Boundary. Board and staff agreed not to change the current policy toward backcountry and sidecountry use of areas adjacent to and around current Eaglecrest boundaries, as expressed in the annual operational plan and area maps. Staff reported that the Juneau Avalanche Center is looking into acquiring beacon checkers that could be placed at known backcountry access points, so that skiers and boarders could determine if their beacons are turned on and working properly. The board supports this, and also supports development of back and sidecountry safety and training programs and materials by appropriate third parties, as recommended in the plan.

i. Terrain Park. Staff would like to continue and expand its efforts of this past season to develop terrain park features on Hooter and also on Porcupine, but to do so slowly, in an orderly way, and within the existing budget structure. The board agreed with this approach.

j. Nordic Terrain. Staff would like to grow Nordic skiing opportunities at Eaglecrest, and toward that end, has purchased Nordic equipment that will be offered for rent this season. The board concurs in this goal. The board recommends creation of a Nordic advisory committee, to address the interests of the Nordic community and to establish a portal for the community to provide input on Nordic skiing opportunities at the area. Likely subjects for consideration by this committee include operational standards for opening and grooming trails and development of facilities that will serve this constituency (*e.g.*, a waxing and warming hut or room). Board member Heine will represent the board in these discussions, along with staff and representatives of the Juneau Nordic Ski Club, with the initial task of identifying the structure and composition of this committee.

k. Snow Play. During development of the master plan, an Eaglecrest user expressed interest in developing luge at the area, in the vicinity of the former tubing hill.

Staff intends to work with this person to test interest in luge, by allowing him to host a few events this season. This will not be an official Eaglecrest activity, but a private effort which, in time, and if sufficient interest exists, may lead to organization of a luge club and perhaps some sort of concession agreement. Persons interested in luge will be referred to this person.

Staff also intends to experiment this season with building a snow pile somewhere in the base area, so that kids who now play on mounds of snow built up from plowing the parking lot will have a better and safer place to play.

2. Summer Operations.

Board and staff had a general discussion about whether to encourage commercial activity at Eaglecrest. Consensus is to support such activity in the base and lower loop areas, below the base of Ptarmigan, provided they generate revenue for the area and are consistent with other area activities and facilities and the character of Eaglecrest. Limited commercial activity above the base area may be considered, but only if the uses are non-motorized and are approved by the board.

Proposals for commercial activity at Eaglecrest will be evaluated using the criteria spelled out in Section IVB of the master plan. A matrix developed by the consultant team early in the planning process, but which was not incorporated into the plan itself, is available to provide guidance to the board on how these criteria might be applied.

a. Multi-Use Trail Network. Board and staff agreed that, given the costs of developing a multi-use trail network at Eaglecrest, as discussed in the master plan, this will be a long term project that will require active participation of outside groups. The board recommends establishment of a trails advisory committee to examine the potential for a network and a strategy for implementation. Board members Audet and Garrison agreed to serve on this advisory committee, along with staff and other parties to be decided. An initial task will be to meet with Trail Mix, to see about incorporating Eaglecrest trail work into their schedule. In the near term, board and staff agreed that it is necessary to address what is happening in the alpine area above Black Bear and Ptarmigan lifts, in particular existing trails to Pittman's Ridge and Dick's Lake. Juneau hikers are actively using these trails, a result of building the maintenance road, and they are suffering from varying degrees of deterioration in places. Staff suggests development of an alpine management plan to address these concerns, a subject that will be taken up by the new trails advisory committee. The committee will also discuss development of a trail to Cropley Lake, in association with a proposal to build a remote cabin in that area.

b. Mountain Biking. Board and staff agreed not to pursue lift assisted mountain biking at Eaglecrest at this time and not to build dedicated biking trails, due to lack of funding. Board and staff further recognized that some level of mountain bike activity is occurring at Eaglecrest now, and that this should not be prohibited. Staff also reported that the grant that was requested for a mountain bike skills park at Eaglecrest

will not move forward, due to removal of federal funding for the program under which the grant was submitted. Staff indicated reluctance to pursue alternative funding for a skills park, on the ground that the terrain at Eaglecrest is not well-suited to a skills park, which generally are situated in flatter areas. The board concurs.

c. Segway Tours. The potential for Segway tours at Eaglecrest was included in the master plan on the recommendation of the consultant team. If and when a third party proposes to offer Segway tours, the discussion in the plan will guide board and staff in considering whether to approve such a proposal.

d. – f. Accommodations. The board expressed interest in the potential for building a remote cabin at Cropley Lake (or elsewhere at Eaglecrest), in part using funds that have been donated to the Eaglecrest Foundation for this purpose. The trails committee will address this topic as part of its agenda. The board is also willing to consider refurbishment of the tubing cabin for rental use, as previously suggested by staff, but understands that discussions staff has had with CBJ planning and engineering departments have raised concerns that would need to be addressed before this project could move forward.

The board is also receptive the idea of a hostel at Eaglecrest that could offer dormitory-style accommodations for individuals and groups traveling to the area. Construction, maintenance, and operation of a hostel would have to be undertaken by a third party, and board members expressed some skepticism that the economics of a hostel would support such a project. The same can be said for the potential for other housing developments at Eaglecrest, including second homes or recreation cabins. The board directed the planning committee to set up meetings with area developers (a list of names was suggested), to gauge interest in projects of this type, and to report on the results to the board.

g. Education. The potential for expanding education opportunities at Eaglecrest depends to some extent on whether a learning center with multi-use space is built. Eaglecrest is already used by some groups (e.g., Discovery Southeast) as an outdoor classroom, and the board encourages this activity.

h. Events. The board encouraged staff to continue their approach to sponsoring events at Eaglecrest and to offering area facilities for rent to outside groups as appropriate. Staff inquired if consideration should be given to hosting a snow machine weekend at Eaglecrest, in the spring after the regular season ends. Board consensus was not to reopen the issue of snow machine access to Eaglecrest, in light of prior board action and the CBJ ordinance prohibiting motorized use in the area.

The board concluded the retreat by discussing two policy issues raised in Section V of the master plan. Consensus was reached, as follows:

1. Beer and Wine Sales. Eaglecrest currently hosts two events that involve sales of beer and wine by a licensed vendor. Staff suggested that they are prepared to

increase this by one or two events, and the board concurred. The potential for establishing an area for regular beer and wine sales in the lodge will be deferred for later discussion.

2. Expansion of CBJ Boundaries. Although some Eaglecrest users favor expanding the boundaries of CBJ-owned land at Eaglecrest and in the upper Fish Creek valley, this is not an issue for the board to decide, but is within the purview of the CBJ Assembly. If the Assembly decides to pursue such an expansion, the board will consider this question and provide input to the Assembly.